

When we were young by lemonlovely

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Summary:

Steve Harrington and Billy Hargrove met when they were kids. Hell, they were best friends for an entire summer. But that was before the Hargroves moved out to Cali. Before Billy's mom died. Before he was so /angry./

Now that they're back in Hawkins, and Billy went through the trouble of asking around about Steve Harrington to find him again - even singling him out at the Halloween party, Steve doesn't seem to remember who he is.

It pisses Billy right the fuck off. And why should he have to REMIND him?

When we were young

Author's Note:

When we were young, Bucks Fizz - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThGD3wLpSLs>

June 5th, 1974

Steve wasn't allowed to get dirty. That was the rule. His mother said so. She'd told him he wasn't supposed to play too rough, or he'd soil his nice lovely new summer clothes – today, she'd picked out a sunny yellow polo for him and a pair of white shorts that looked a lot like what his dad wore when he went golfing. Even his sneakers were a nice, bright white, with the laces tied up tight. He had a light sweater tied around his shoulders in case it rained or there was a chill.

Steve had been allowed to go to the park with Tommy Hoult as long as they promised to behave themselves, and to be back at the house by five o'clock. They were supposed to go to the park that was close to Loch Nora – SweetHollow Park – the one that was within walking distance, but Tommy had convinced Steve that they could ride their bikes and go to the one on the other side of Main Street – which was *really* far.

But Steve was already *eight years old* – he was practically a grownup, he could definitely ride his bike that far. That was *easy*, and he'd never been to SandyWay Park, so he figured it was probably worth the ride – he'd heard they had good monkey bars and he was best at that.

They threw their bikes against the slide and hung out in the shade beneath the jungle gym. The monkey bars weren't that great. There were a few other kids hanging around the park, and a mom with a baby on the little baby swings that were for *babies* and Steve and Tommy stood on the big kid swings and swung back and forth, hanging onto the chains until Tommy fell and Steve laughed at him.

"Yeah yeah screw you too." Tommy scowled up at him, wiping at a busted lip from hitting the gravel.

“I’m not the idiot that fell on his face.” Steve laughed more. He hopped down from where he’d stood on the swing, and held out a hand to help Tommy up. “Sorry, are you okay?”

Tommy swatted at his hand and stood up on his own, brushing at his knees.

“I’m fine, jesus.” He looked around to see if anyone had seen him fall.

He went still, a blush coloring his cheeks as he stood on his toes, trying to get a better look over at the bench by the little pond.

“Oh hey. Hey Stevie, look – is that Carol Whittaker? It is right? You don’t think she saw that, uh, do you?”

Steve turned around to get a better look, tilting his head a little to see passed the big bar of the swingset. Yeah, it was Carol Whittaker, sitting on the bench with what might have been one of her friends. Steve frowned a little. He didn’t know why they were at this park, but there they were, and well – shoot. Whenever Tommy saw Carol on the playground at school he always went and chased her around, and left Steve to do, well, whatever. Steve’d really been looking forward to hanging out with Tommy, but she was here TOO.

“Yeah, I think it is. And no, I guess not, she’s looking the other way isn’t she?”

“Totally.” Tommy cleared his throat and got a wicked grin on his freckled face – straightening up in his brown and orange striped t-shirt and brown corduroy bellbottoms. “I’m gonna go catch a frog to show her. Wanna help?”

Steve frowned and looked down at his ‘lovely new summer clothes.’

“Eh. I’m not supposed to get dirty, mom said – “ He started.

“Ugh you and your mom, don’t be such a momma’s boy – c’mon, Carol’ll think it’s COOL I bet.” Tommy puffed out his chest.

Steve made a snooty look at him. “I’m not going to go digging around in that grody water with you.” He said. He thought his dad might want him to say something like that.

Tommy rolled his eyes at him. “Ugh fine. Be a baby, Stevie.” Tommy ran towards the water, hiking off his shoes as he ran.

Steve sighed and folded his arms across his chest, watching his friend stumble towards the waters edge – he honestly just didn’t like to do that with Tommy anymore. They used to catch tadpoles, but ever since Tommy started using them to go fishing with, Steve didn’t like that so much anymore. He didn’t want to know what Tommy would do to the frog to have to catch it, or if he’d hold it too hard like last time.

Steve scowled and sat down heavily on the swing, tugging his backpack up from where it leaned against the bar, pulling out a few of his green army men – they were just like his grandpa, his grandpa had been in the big war and he thought they were really cool, just like his grandpa was.

He fidgeted with them and glanced over his shoulder under his lashes at where Tommy was sopping around in the water with his corduroys rolled up around his knees, lurking around in the lily pads. Carol and her friend were laughing at him, saying something. Steve scowled at the little green army men he’d brought to play war with Tommy.

Carol started shrieking as Tommy started chasing her with a big bullfrog he’d caught, holding it up as they ran in circles in the grassy lawn. His mom would say Steve was moping.

Steve WASN’T moping.

“Hey those are pretty cool,” somebody said.

Steve looked up from the army guy, the toes of his sneakers dragging in the gravel as the swing shifted lazily back and forth. A light breeze brushed passed.

“Huh?”

“I said, those are pretty cool.” A boy was standing a little ways off from the swingset, a beat up old basketball balanced between his hands, gesturing with it towards what Steve had in his hands.

Steve had never seen him before. Which was weird. He’d seen

everybody.

He was a little shorter than Steve – Steve thought he might be a little younger, maybe seven, so like, really young actually. Way younger than Steve. Steve was already EIGHT. The boy had really messy, bright blonde hair, and it was really curly and frizzy, like maybe he hadn't brushed it in a million trillion years, and he had dirt on his face with a really big grin – he was missing three of his baby teeth, right in the front. He had a bandaid on one cheek, and another on his knee – he was wearing some weird looking shorts and a plain gray t-shirt that Steve realized had *holes* in it, and a questionable, slightly wet looking spot near the collar that looked like the boy might have been *chewing* on it. Steve could see a little bit of his sock through a hole in the toe of his sneaker. He also had these REALLY blue eyes, like blue blue, really blue, like maybe the sky, or like the 'sky' color blue in the crayon box.

"Oh um. Thanks." Steve smiled up at him, stilling the swing with his shoe. "I'm Steve, Steve Harrington, what's your name?"

"My name is..." The boy tilted his head with a small frown, eyes shifting away like he was thinking about something real hard.
"William."

"Wow hey nice to meet you. Why haven't I seen you at school?" Steve asked. "Where'd you get that bandaid? Do you play basketball? Where do you live? I live in Loch Nora."

"You ask a lot of questions." The boy laughed. "Uh, I dunno. I live over on Old Cherry Road, we just moved here from a few towns over 'cause my dad's job. 'n I don't go to school here. My mom teaches me at home."

"Oh. That's weird." Steve nodded.

Wow, Old Cherry Road – Steve wasn't ever supposed to go there, not even Trick Or Treating because it was on the other side of the railroad tracks, but Steve didn't actually think the railroad tracks even went through Hawkins, so, he didn't know why people said that – but it meant it was BAD. And this kid LIVED there. Cool.

“Yeah well, I don’t think so. And I fell down, so I got this cool Scooby-Doo bandaid, yeah, playing basketball – wanna see?” He held up his knee so Steve could inspect it better, a cocky grin on his face.

It really WAS COOL.

“THAT REALLY IS COOL. I didn’t know they made Scooby-Doo bandaids. Who’s your favorite character? My favorite character is Shaggy because I think he’s SO funny.”

William grinned, tossing the basketball back and forth in his grubby looking hands. Steve wondered if maybe he ever washed them. His mom would be upset if Steve had gross hands. Steve noticed that he had a couple bruises, too – he thought maybe William must fall down a lot.

“My favorite character? Oh uh. I think it’s probably Fred.” William smiled his gap-toothed grin. “He always leads the adventures, y’know? Hey so I wanted to ask you if you wanna play – I was just tossing some free throws but if you aren’t busy – well, you play ball? Not really anybody else around, besides that jackass with the frog and a buncha girls.” He frowned.

Woah. He said JACKASS. He was pretty far out. Steve hid a smile and shook his head.

“No. I don’t know how to play. I’m in Little League this summer, so we play baseball over at SweetHollow. They don’t have a basketball court there. We’ve played dodgeball at school though? How do you play?”

William laughed – it was a really funny laugh, and it was the kind of laugh that made Steve laugh too. “It’s not like dodgeball. C’mon, I’ll show you, kay?”

Steve glanced over his shoulder, where Tommy was talking with Carol Whittaker and trying to make her kiss the frog. Like the princess story, Steve bet. So funny he forgot to laugh. He rolled his eyes and turned back to the strange new boy.

“Um yeah okay. I’ve just gotta be home by five.”

“No problem.” There was that wicked smile again.

January 08th, 1985

Steve’s back hit the court, and he actually SLID a little, on the smooth polished floor – his elbow dragging, giving him a burn that instantly stung. He hissed and knocked his head back against the floorboards, glaring at the caged lighting up above. Billy sneered down at him, wagging his tongue, basketball smacking against the floor by Steve’s head. He could feel the vibration of it in his skull.

“Havin’ a little trouble there, Harrington?” He laughed, parroted by a few of his Skins teammates nearby that were still catching their breath.

“Nope. Doing just fine.” Steve grunted, rolling onto his side and trying to drag himself up, even though he’d gotten the wind knocked out of him a little. And his elbow was skinned, burning like a bitch.

Tommy was laughing like a fucking dumb ass donkey across the court.

“You feelin’ that one, Stevie? Huh?” He called.

Steve scowled at him, scrubbing at the back of his neck where too much perspiration was making his hair curl, making it itch, at the nape of his neck. If coach wasn’t there he’d flip Tommy off, but he didn’t wanna get benched AGAIN. He was breathing hard. They got back in position, coach blew the whistle. Billy was thundering down the court, the ball pounding against the wood as Steve tried to block his route, attempting to smack the ball out of his grasp, but it didn’t do much good as Billy barreled by him and left Steve running after him – finally back before him, he feinted left, right, left again, and finally stole the ball from him midair.

Stealing his way back towards the opposite basket – but Billy was on him like white on rice, shouldering into him, trying to get the ball back – Steve twisted around, dribbling, caught it in both hands as he planted one foot and passed it to one of his teammates, Jacob. Billy elbowed into him on his way by as they carried on, as Jacob took the shot – sunk the ball, nothing but net, and Steve’s team cheered.

The whistle blew again. “That’s a wrap ladies! Hit the showers! Good hustle out there.”

Billy looked PISSED, his bright blue eyes – which Steve always found almost unnervingly familiar, in such a way he couldn’t ever place – locked on Steve, nostrils flaring wide, neck muscles working.

“Cheap shot, Harrington.” Tommy grumbled as he walked by, slinging a towel around his neck and chugging water from an Aladdin thermos.

“Just playing the game.” Steve bit back.

Under the steam of the showers, where it furled around them like hazy clouds, Steve stuck his head under one of the shower heads, ignoring Tommy’s dumbass griping and pestering. He winced when he got under the splash of the water – trying to get a better look at his elbow, but all he could really see was a very angry red patch – he couldn’t actually tell if it was actually bleeding, although it just felt badly skinned. It fucking HURT when the water hit it, but he just had to suck that shit up.

“Why the hell you pass the ball Harrington?” Billy snapped as he stood under his own shower head, water dripping down his chin, jaw, pooling in the dips of his collar bone – not that Steve was looking. Steve closed his eyes, pinching the bridge of his nose as he kept his head under the water.

“Because he was open?”

“You had a clear fucking shot. You should have just taken it yourself.”

“Well if you weren’t always on my ass, maybe I would have.” Steve huffed out a puff of air, spraying water.

“Who cares, they won, it was just LUCK that he even got the ball away from you.” Tommy glared at Steve, an ugly look on his face, mouth half hanging open – water dripping off of his nose as he scrubbed with a bar of dial soap.

Billy threw a glare in Tommy’s direction, clearly non plussed,

ignoring what he said and then glancing back at Steve.

“Shoulda just taken the shot, Harrington. You don’t set that up just to pass it.”

Steve ignored him as he scrubbed shampoo into his hair, rinsing the salt of sweat from the brunette locks, half rubbing it into his eyes and then regretting that decision as he ducked back under the spray. Trying to let the water in his ears block them out.

Outside of the showers, gathering at lockers, guys towel snapping each other and sprawled out over benches with wide legs and towels that didn’t hide much, Steve gathered his clothes out of his locker – the metal door hanging open.

Guys were already starting to filter out, trickling out really, and Steve took his time so that most of them would be gone by the time he left. Billy’s locker was on the other end of the row – and he seemed to be dragging his feet too, though Steve couldn’t understand why. Usually he booked it out of the locker room like a bat out of hell to pick up his sister on time – ah, that was probably why. Today was an AV club day. There wasn’t a rush – that was why Steve wasn’t hurtling towards Hawkins Middle-school himself, he actually had some time today.

Billy slammed his locker, pocketing his keys in his over-tight, acid wash denim jeans as he strutted on his way towards the door back into the gym.

“Harrington.” Billy snapped. Steve glanced up at him, a crease edging in between his brows – usually, especially since that night at the Byers – Billy never spoke to him, not outside of when there were hecklers and his cronies to egg him on. No, he never talked to him when they were alone – hell, he seemed to avoid those situations at all costs. Steve’s face was still a little tender in some spots, if he touched it just so, and sometimes the headaches still came back - so he really didn’t mind if Billy kept to himself.

“Yeah, what.” Steve grumbled.

Billy glanced away like he was irritated, with Steve, probably – and he was holding something in his hand, a white something, maybe a small piece of paper, which he shoved at Steve unceremoniously before clapping him rough on the shoulder on his way by.

“Spray some Bactine on that shit. The gym floor is disgusting.” Billy snapped as he slid his pack of Marlboros out of his denim jacket pocket, tamping it down in one hand as he kept his back to Steve, boots clomping and echoing strangely in the tile floored locker room.

Steve stared after him in confusion, blinking – his elbow burning in reminder as he realized that Billy had handed him an oversized band-aid. Something tickled in the back of his mind. Something about band-aids. Sometimes that happened around Billy – but Steve could never quite put his finger on the source.

“Oh.” Steve blinked, shocked. “Hey, thanks –” Steve started, glancing uneasily over his shoulder, back at Billy’s locker. “You just keep these in your locker?”

“Never know when you’ll need one.” Billy was almost to the swinging door.

“I mean...I guess you do sorta get in a lot of fights.” Steve tried to put a smile in his voice – he really was thankful, even though, well, one of those fights had been when Billy had smashed a plate over his head and tried to crush Steve’s skull against the Byer’s drawings-scattered floor.

“Yeah, ‘n I always win.” Steve heard a reflected, smug grin in Billy’s voice as he swung his way out of the locker room. Leaving Steve with a band-aid for a skinned elbow, and a healthy helping of confusion.

Notes for the Chapter:

Thanks for reading this, hopefully it's alright, and I'm @lemonlovely on Tumblr!

Author's Note:

Thank you so much to @Pan-Shego for being an amazing human being as always and helping me

with beta-reading, and to @CeruleanHeart for being
my moral support. I <3 u bbs.